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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
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INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0437
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0158
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7139
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5244
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3794
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1038
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3866
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1099
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2949
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7730
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5392
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0220
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2089
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000788

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR S GROFF, D TETER, D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: GOVERNMENT ARRESTS ANOTHER FORMER
RAJAPAKSA FRIEND

REF: A. COLOMBO 263

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 451

Classified By: A/DCM Michael DeTar for reasons 1.4(b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On May 30, 2007, the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) arrested the Chairman of Standard Newspapers Ltd. and former Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, Tiran Alles, on allegations of "aiding terrorists." The arrest occurred as Alles was receiving treatment in a private hospital for complications associated with diabetes. Colombo Chief Magistrate Sarojini Kusala set Alles' hearing for June 13, but allowed him to stay under arrest in the hospital rather than in jail until then. Alles is a close associate of former Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera and former Deputy Minister of Port Development Sripathi Sooriyarachchi, who were sacked by President Rajapaksa on February 9, 2007 and have since landed in legal troubles of their own. The administration's critics, including Sooriyarachchi, have charged repeatedly that Alles paid bribes to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) under the direction of then-candidate Mahinda Rajapaksa's campaign manager, Samaraweera, and Rajapaksa's brother Basil. The contact with the LTTE during the 2005 presidential election was allegedly part of an effort to induce the LTTE to suppress Tamil votes for Rajapaksa's opponent, Ranil Wickremesinghe. END SUMMARY.

PUBLISHER ARRESTED IN HOSPITAL

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 30, 2007, the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) arrested Tiran Alles at the hospital where he was receiving treatment for complications associated with diabetes. According to Alles' parents, the arrest came after approximately a week of interrogations by the TID regarding unspecified allegations that Alles violated the Prevention of

Terrorism Act (PTA) by aiding the LTTE.

RUMORS OF BRIBES PAID TO THE TIGERS

13. (C) Rumors have been rampant for months that Alles provided large sums of cash to the Tamil Tigers during the 2005 presidential campaign. Media outlets have reported that Alles gave money to the LTTE at the direction of then-Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's campaign manager, Mangala Samaraweera, and Rajapaksa's brother Basil (ref A). According to these reports, Rajapaksa sought the aid of the LTTE to suppress Tamil votes, the vast majority of which would likely have been cast for Rajapaksa's opponent, Ranil Wickremesinghe.

14. (C) Alles' friend and former Deputy Minister of Ports, Sripathi Sooriyarachchi, has been the most vocal about Rajapaksa's alleged involvement in bribing the LTTE. He has continued to hurl these charges even after his arrest on March 17, 2007 for misuse of a government vehicle (ref B). The hostility between Sooriyarachchi, Samaraweera, Alles and Rajapaksa did not break out into the open until shortly before President Rajapaksa dismissed Sooriyarachchi and Samaraweera from their ministerial posts on February 9, 2007 (ref A). Alles has kept a much lower profile than the two former ministers, perhaps seeking to avoid what happened to Sooriyarachchi.

FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER UNDER PRESSURE

15. (C) Samaraweera has also been vocal in his criticism of

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the President. The latest attempt to mediate a rapprochement between Samaraweera and Rajapaksa failed when Samaraweera declined the President's offer to rejoin the administration as Minister for Irrigation. Samaraweera departed Sri Lanka for London shortly thereafter, reportedly returning on May 30. Also on May 30, almost simultaneously with Alles' arrest, the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Central Committee voted to initiate disciplinary action against Samaraweera. However, President Rajapaksa personally stayed the order for two weeks to give Samaraweera time to consider rejoining the administration. Samaraweera apparently now has two weeks to mull over his options.

16. (C) COMMENT: Rumors that Sooriyarachchi possesses a video tape implicating Basil Rajapaksa in the LTTE bribery scandal have circulated for months. Some Embassy interlocutors claim to have seen parts of it. With the arrest of Tiran Alles, rumors are again swirling that Sooriyarachchi will publicly release the video. However, we have yet to see any concrete evidence that the video exists.
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